

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

WORLD TRADE

RULES COMMITTEE

COMMUNITY & REGIONAL AFFAIRS

LABOR & COMMERCE



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**SENATOR BERTA GARDNER**  
SENATE DEMOCRATIC LEADER  
SENATE DISTRICT I

## **Sponsor Statement**

*SB 72 - "An Act adding to the powers and duties of the State Commission for Human Rights; and relating to and prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity or expression."*

Senate Bill 72 expands current anti-discrimination statutes to include protections against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Similar provisions already prohibit discrimination based upon race, religion, color, national origin, physical or mental disability, age, sex, marital status, changes in marital status, pregnancy or parenthood.

Senate Bill 72 would protect citizens from discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, financing or credit based upon sexual orientation and gender identity.

The State of Alaska has already taken steps to prevent discrimination with a 2002 administrative order that provides protection against sexual orientation discrimination for employees of the state. In 2010, the University of Alaska amended its antidiscrimination policy to include protections against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

According to the Human Rights Campaign, the overwhelming majority of America's most successful businesses have already adopted antidiscrimination policies that include protections against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Twenty-one states and the District of Columbia have enacted legislation similar to Senate Bill 72. Despite the progress that has been made nationwide, 73% of LG8T respondents to a survey in Anchorage reported hiding their sexual orientation in order to avoid job discrimination after experiencing abuse or harassment in the workplace.

Historically, Alaska has been at the forefront of civil rights legislation. The Territorial legislature awarded women the right to vote in 1913, well before it was passed at the national level. In 1945, the Alaska legislature passed landmark anti-discriminatory legislation protecting Alaska Natives. Senate Bill 72 stands as an opportunity for Alaska to continue its strong tradition of recognition of human rights.

I look forward to your support of Senate Bill 72.